

December 9, 2009

Washington, DC – Rep. Ben Ray Luján sent a letter to Dr. Robert M. Groves, Director of the U.S. Census Bureau, urging him to use their resources to obtain a full count in New Mexico. The Census is used to make decisions about providing community services, distributing federal funds to local, state and tribal governments, and determining the distribution of Congressional seats.

“Rural communities have a particular need for federal investment in their educational, transportation, and communications infrastructure, yet they can be disadvantaged by Census counts used to determine funding levels,” wrote Rep. Luján “I encourage the Bureau to continue its aggressive public outreach strategy and to consider expanding its approach where appropriate. I also encourage the Bureau to utilize all available methods of communication to accurately count rural and remote communities such as those in my District.”

During the 2000 Census, New Mexico was one of the most poorly counted states in the United States. The response rate in 2000 for New Mexico was only 62 percent. Four counties in New Mexico’s Third Congressional district—Taos, Rio Arriba, Mora and Colfax—replied at a response rate of less than 45 percent.

FULL TEXT OF THE LETTER

December 8, 2009

*Dr. Robert M. Groves
Director
U.S. Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Commerce*

Washington, DC 20233

Dear Director Groves,

Thank you for your commitment to obtaining census data that accurately reflects the current demographic, social and economic conditions of our nation. The United States Census Bureau is tasked with carrying out a critically important job with limited resources, and I commend you and your staff for your diligence and hard work.

As you continue to move forward with Census 2010 activities, I urge you to consider the particular needs of rural and remote communities. During the 2000 Census, New Mexico was one of the most poorly counted states in the United States. The response rate in 2000 for New Mexico was only 62 percent. Four counties in my district—Taos, Rio Arriba, Mora and Colfax—replied at a response rate of less than 45 percent. Obtaining an accurate count in this heavily rural region is extremely challenging due to inconsistent access to the internet, television and even radio in some particularly remote areas. Homes in rural areas are often located far from the road or their neighbors, making them difficult to locate. In addition, many of my constituents are Spanish-speaking and face language and cultural barriers that may keep them from being counted.

Rural communities have a particular need for federal investment in their educational, transportation, and communications infrastructure, yet they can be disadvantaged by Census counts used to determine funding levels. I encourage the Bureau to continue its aggressive public outreach strategy and to consider expanding its approach where appropriate. I also encourage the Bureau to utilize all available methods of communication to accurately count rural and remote communities such as those in my District. Thank you again for your efforts and please do not hesitate to contact me or my office if I can assist you in any way.

Sincerely,

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress (NM-03)